

SCHOOL COMPOSTING F.A.Q.

What is compost? A nutrient-rich soil that is created when organic materials like food scraps are allowed to decompose.

What can you compost? Black Earth Compost accepts all food scraps and certified compostable serviceware. This includes dairy products, meat/bones, fruit, vegetables, tea bags, food-soiled paper napkins and towels, and plates/utensils/packaging that are certified compostable. They do not accept waxed cardboard, milk cartons, paper cups, or similar items. A complete list of the materials that Black Earth Compost accepts can be found in Appendix I. All waste station signage prepared by the DPW will indicate what can go into each lunchroom bin.

What is certified compostable serviceware? Black Earth Compost only accepts BPI, CMA, and TUV certified products, which means these products have gone through a rigorous testing process and have been confirmed to break down completely in a commercial compost facility.

Where does our compost go? The Town's organics are collected by Black Earth Compost - a local industrial-scale composting company. Black Earth Compost has three facilities in Massachusetts - Groton (their premier facility which receives most of Brookline's compost), Framingham and Manchester-by-the-Sea.

Can you compost meat and dairy? Yes! Black Earth Compost uses industrial-scale composting that gets much hotter than backyard composting allowing you to compost meat, bones, and dairy.

Does composting make a difference? Food waste sent to landfills produces methane, a greenhouse gas 86 times as potent as CO₂! Composting is a sustainable cycle. Food waste gets made into rich compost, which is used in our communities to grow more food. This process will help to remove over 1 million tons of food waste from the waste stream in Massachusetts every year!

Is compost smelly? Well-managed compost should not smell or cause odors. Custodial staff will remove compost as well as other waste from the lunchroom in a timely manner. Kitchen and lunchroom compost will be consolidated into large bins outdoors that will be collected weekly.

What methods of composting are there? There are two categories, anaerobic (without oxygen) and aerobic (with oxygen). Anaerobic composting typically involves the use of an anaerobic digester, which creates a rich soil amendment and generates gas that can be turned into electricity. In aerobic composting, aerobic microorganisms break down organic matter and produce a nutrient-rich fertilizer. Aerobic composting is much more common - Black Earth Compost, for example, uses aerobic composting methods.